

Trinity Sanctuary Psychology Project

Purpose

The purpose of our group is to facilitate and support the work of psychologists who have volunteered their time to work with traumatised refugees. The project has the support of Trinity College Dublin, which funded and supported training to date, and the Psychological Society of Ireland. We are currently operating as an informal committee.

Progress to date

So far, we have recruited around 120 psychologists who have pledged a minimum of two hours per week on a pro bono basis for a period of three months. Most of this time has been pledged for one-to-one therapy, group counselling, supervision and workshops, but a small proportion will be used for the preparation of mental health support materials and resources for refugees.

We rolled out specific training with Dr Debra Nofziger on Cognitive Processing Therapy for individuals who have experienced trauma in a conflict situation. In the summer we had a very informative session with William Gorman and Marian Joyce from the Kovler Centre in Chicago, which supports survivors of torture. We will continue to identify and provide additional training for volunteers.

In the background we have been building working relationships and referral pathways with existing organisations and state bodies, such as HSE, Spirasi, the Irish Refugee Council, MyMind and Tusla. We have been fortunate to receive funding for interpreters through the Ireland for Ukraine funds. We have established links within Trinity College with the Centre for Forced Migration Studies and with Trinity Global Engagement. Our project is now named as the **Trinity Sanctuary Psychology Project** in reference to our links with Trinity

College as a University of Sanctuary. Although our initial efforts in this project were to support individuals from Ukraine, we have now identified the need for equity in our response. As such, through our collaboration with agencies who are well established in the field we have now widened our remit to support all individuals who have been displaced by conflict, war and torture.

We are also in the process of securing some clinical space that can be made available in Dublin city centre for psychologists who cannot use their own premises. We have reached out to private practices and Trinity College for available space. We have also used rooms that have been made available to us by referring agencies.

We have now received a volume of referrals and have engaged some of our volunteer psychologists in individual therapeutic work. Our model is that we hold a directory of psychologists that can be contacted individually as referrals are received. We will endeavour to match the referral to the remit of the psychologist based on location, client group and availability. Our volunteers essentially work as private practitioners on a pro bono basis. They are responsible for their own record keeping, indemnification and governance. In many instances our volunteer psychologists are already employed by state organisations and are thus insured and governed under their remit. We are also seeking assistance with the State Claims Agency to provide indemnification under existing structures.

We believe that there is a large reserve of goodwill among psychologists ready to be activated.

We have given the issue of risk considerable thought and feel that the model we operate minimise exposure to risk. We are not a service, but rather an “agency” that links clients with

qualified psychologists, who then operate as independent practitioners, essentially offering therapy privately, but on a pro bono basis. Such individuals would need to hold private indemnification.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes

Caroline Traynor
Maeve Connolly
Kevin Tierney
Katarina Timulakova